



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **USDA Farm Bill Forum Brought To Elkins, WV Forest Festival**

**Morgantown, WV – October 3, 2005:** Rural Development State Director Robert M. Steptoe, III, Farm Service Agency State Executive Director John Rader, and Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist Ron Hilliard announce that U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns is taking a hands-on approach in designing the next Farm Bill legislation by bringing his nationwide Farm Bill listening tour to the WV Forest Festival on Friday, October 7, 2005 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The forum will be held at the Elkins Middle School, 308 Robert E. Lee Avenue, Elkins, WV. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be seeking input from America's farmers, ranchers and rural residents regarding the development of the 2007 Farm Bill.

The public is invited to attend the Farm Bill Forum to engage in open dialogue about farm bill policy. "The Farm Bill Forums provide an opportunity for us to hear directly from America's farmers and ranchers," stated Johanns.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture news releases, Johanns said he is "pleased that our USDA team will also be hosting additional forums that will focus on conservation, rural development and nutrition. I encourage as many citizens as possible to participate in these forums as we prepare for the development of a new farm bill."

"The 2007 Farm Bill," Johanns remarked, "will affect America's entire agricultural community, so I believe our entire agricultural community should have a say in the process. I welcome input from across the nation about what is working and what we can do to improve farm policy."

When participating in the forums, the USDA media releases noted, "the public is invited to respond to one or more of the following six questions. The format of the forum will also allow an open comment period for general farm bill comments."

1. How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers and the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?
2. How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to effectively compete in global markets?

3. How should farm policy be designed to effectively and fairly distribute assistance to producers?
4. How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?
5. How can Federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?
6. How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next farm bill?

The public is also welcome to submit their comments via the USDA Farm Bill Forums Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill> or by mail to Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, Farm Bill, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 116A, Washington, DC 20250-3355. USDA will review the public comments received by December 30, 2005, including any analyses, reports, studies and other material submitted with the comments, that address the six topics that have been identified to provide the framework for the nationwide forums.

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